

Targeted Research Area: Other—Childhood Obesity

General Information on Childhood Obesity

- **Prevalence and incidence of childhood obesity:** The prevalence of childhood obesity has more than doubled during the last two decades. Today, nearly 13% of children (ages 6-11) and 14% of adolescents (ages 12-19) are either overweight or obese. Hospitalizations for childhood obesity tripled to reach 1 percent of all hospitalizations of children.⁸⁴
- **Mortality from childhood obesity:** This information was not readily available to Lewin.
- **Disease severity/disease burden:**
 - There has been a dramatic increase in chronic diseases associated with obesity in children, including type II diabetes and chronic disorders such as gall bladder disease and sleep apnea, as well as other disorders such as mental illness and asthma.⁸⁵
 - From 1979 to 1999, childhood hospitalizations related to: diabetes nearly doubled from 1.43% to 2.36%, obesity tripled from 0.36% to 1.07%, gallbladder diseases tripled from 0.18% to 0.59%, and sleep apnea increase five-fold from 0.14% to 0.75%.⁸⁶
- **Cost to individual/family/society/healthcare system:**
 - Health care costs from diseases related to childhood obesity increased from \$35 million (.43% of hospital costs) in 1979 to \$127 million (1.7% of hospital costs) in 1999 (based on 2001 constant US dollar value).⁸⁷
 - Overweight children become overweight adults, who incur more than \$68 billion on health care related directly to obesity, representing 6% of US health care expenditures.⁸⁸
- **Frequency/load of exposure:** This information was not readily available to Lewin.
- **Special Populations:**
 - Parental obesity doubles the likelihood of adult obesity among both obese and non-obese children under the age of 10.⁸⁹
 - Poor white adolescents were 2.6 times more likely to be overweight than those in middle or high income families; overweight and obesity rates were highest for Mexican American males ages 6-11, African-American females ages 6-19, and adolescents ages 12-19 from low income households.⁹⁰

Hypothesis 28, described on the following pages, is associated with the Other Specialized Research Areas – Obesity targeted research area.

⁸⁴ Wang G, Dietz WH. Economic burden of obesity in youths aged 6 to 17 years: 1979-1999. *Pediatrics*. 2002 May;109(5):E81-1.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. *Facts about Childhood Obesity and Overweightness*. Family Economics and Nutrition Review. 1999; 12(1) 52-53.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.